

COUNCIL ACTION FORM

SUBJECT: 2010/11 NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT GRANTS

BACKGROUND:

For the 15th consecutive year, the City Council has appropriated Local Option Sales Tax funds to finance the Neighborhood Improvement Program (NIP). This year, \$50,000 was approved for neighborhood programs, with \$25,000 earmarked for the NIP and the remaining \$25,000 allocated for a broader array of neighborhood projects to be determined by the City Council.

There are two main goals of the NIP: (1) to strengthen a neighborhood's appearance with the addition of permanent physical improvements, and (2) to promote a greater sense of community through resident participation in a neighborhood project.

Each project application is rated on the following 100-point system. A project must achieve at least 50 points to be considered:

Resident Involvement (30 points maximum):*

...the number of residents donating their time and/or labor to accomplish the project

...the number of residents donating funds to the project

*10 points 1-25 people; 20 points 26-50 people; 30 points over 50 people

Project Impact (30 points maximum):**

...the number of residents who will be positively affected by the improvement

**10 points 1-25 people; 20 points 26-100 people; 30 points over 100 people

Safety (10 points maximum):

...enhancement of safety in the neighborhood

Public Space (10 points maximum):

...promotion of social interaction by utilizing public space

Improved Housing (10 points maximum)

Environment (10 points maximum):

...support for the environment

This year, two applications were received for a total funding request of \$7,888. The Review Panel, comprised of City staff members and two citizens, scored the applications and recommended that both projects be approved for funding.

The Review Panel recommends approval by the City Council of the following projects:

OLD TOWN PARK, PHASE 2:

This grant is for the second phase of a comprehensive plan for Old Town Park, which is located at the southeast corner of 9th and Douglas. This phase involves the creation of a shade garden under a large tree located near the center of the Park. Currently the area is visually very unattractive because of the bare dirt (or mud) under the tree. Transforming the area into a shade garden will improve its appearance and resolve the mud problems. A seating area will also be developed within the shade garden.

The shade bed in question is adjacent to the play structure, which is heavily used by families with young children. Shade-tolerant plants specifically attractive to children will be purchased and planted. Stepping stones of imprinted concrete will be created and placed throughout the bed to channel foot traffic. Young children of the neighborhood will be involved by making leaf imprints and hand prints and embedding objects into the concrete to create a decorative surface on the concrete.

The total cost of the project is \$7,888. Requested City funding is \$2,888. The applicants are providing cash and in-kind contributions in the amount of \$3,500. The Parks & Recreation Department will be donating mulch and used benches in the amount of \$1,500. Neighborhood involvement will include planning and organizing work days; purchasing and planting new plants; relocating plants from the east planter box; building frames, pouring concrete, and working with children to do the imprinting, and installing the stepping stones; and ongoing watering and weeding of the plants.

MOORE MEMORIAL PARK POND AND RAIN GARDENS:

The goal of this project is to educate residents in Northridge Subdivision about the impact of their actions on Moore Memorial Park Pond and encourage them to make changes in their routines that will improve the Pond. Duckweed is currently overpopulating the Pond, which is preventing sunlight from entering it. The lack of sunlight is allowing fecal chloroform bacteria to grow, which could be dangerous to humans as well as wildlife. The source of the bacteria may be coming from the watershed in the form of animal feces. It is also believed that lawn fertilizer that is high in phosphorous is ultimately draining into the Park Pond. The intent is to lower nutrient levels in the Pond, which will cause a reduction of duckweed; thus, allowing sunlight to enter the Pond and help destroy fecal chloroform bacteria.

This project is being coordinated by the Ames High School Environmental Science class. It will also involve several residents of the neighborhood who are interested in planting a rain garden on their properties. A neighborhood outreach day has been planned to raise awareness about this project and encourage the installation of rain gardens, filter strips, and native plants. Neighborhood residents will help plan and host that event. An informational bulletin board will also be installed to educate citizens about a watershed's effect on bodies of water. Educating residents of the area on ways to prevent nutrient runoff will ultimately improve the water quality of not only Moore Memorial Park Pond, but also a downstream pond and eventually Squaw Creek. Staff from Public Works has met with the advisor for and members of the Environmental Science class. City staff will also be advising the residents on best practices for rain gardens.

Neighborhood involvement will include cash, in-kind labor for planning and hosting the neighborhood outreach day, and planning and planting rain gardens.

The total cost of the project is \$10,200. Requested City funding is \$5,000. The applicants are providing cash and in-kind labor in the amount of \$5,200.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. The City Council can approve the expenditure of \$7,888 to fund NIP grants for Phase 2 of Old Town Park Renovation and Moore Memorial Park Pond
2. The City Council can reject any or all of the projects for funding at this time.

MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Supporting projects that strengthen neighborhoods is in keeping with one of the City Council's goals. Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative #1, thereby approving Neighborhood Improvement Program grants in the amount of \$7,888 to fund NIP grants for Phase 2 of Old Town Park Renovation and Moore Memorial Park Pond.